

# CHARTER REVIEW COMMITTEE

## MINUTES

December 21, 2020

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5:30 p.m.

**CALL TO ORDER** Chairperson Singer called the meeting to order at 5:35 p.m.

**PRESENT** Chairperson David Singer, Vice Chairperson Otis Wheeler, Councilor Shelia Gilmour, Erin Donnally Drake, John Lunt, Allen Woods and Councilor Forgey (arrived at 6:25 pm)

**ABSENT** None.

**ALSO PRESENT** None.

**CHAIR STATEMENT:** This meeting is being recorded by the Charter Review Committee. If any other persons present were doing the same they must notify the chairperson at this time.

Chairperson Singer requested that the vote to accept the minutes for December 7, 2020, be moved to the next Charter Review Committee meeting to allow a number of proposed amendments to the minutes be introduced.

**MOTION:** On a motion by Committee Member Lunt, second by Councilor Gilmour, it was unanimously, **TABLED:** TO APPROVE THE CHARTER REVIEW COMMITTEE MINUTES DATED DECEMBER 7, 2020.

Chairperson Singer opened continued discussion on Article 6 of the Charter: Administrative Organization. Suggestions and recommendations included:

- Section 18: Council on Aging
  - Subsection (a) - Marsha Stone, Chair for the Council on Aging, had submitted a proposal to reduce the maximum number of board members from 15 to 11.
  - Subsection (d) – Suggestion was made by Council Member Lunt to add “Organization” after “Senior Center” in the first sentence of the paragraph.
- Councilor Gilmour suggested that the Human Rights Commission should be added to the Greenfield Charter.
- Section 23: Cable Advisory Board: - Suggestion was made by Councilor Gilmour to amend the language to allow flexibility with the ever changing technological innovations. Committee member Lunt suggested that the Section’s language remain as is until the City was notified of changes to any laws that could affect this issue in the future.
- Section 24: Mayor’s Task Force Against Domestic Violence – Councilor Wheeler had submitted a proposal to add two (2) alternate members to sit on the task force.

Chairperson Singer opened discussion on Article 7 of the Charter: Elections; Election Related Matters. Suggestions and recommendations included:

- The Panel discussed benefits and detriments of Rank Choice Voting. The Rank Choice Voting ordinance of Easthampton was presented as an example. It was also discussed that under the current system in Greenfield, both At large councilors and School Committee members are elected by determining who receives the top two best results, which means at least one winner will receive less than 50%. If RCV is being considered, must take into consideration that the goal of the RCV system is so “a winner receives more than 50% of the vote”. In order for RCV to become part of

the Charter, the requirements of MGL Chapter 43B would have to be followed. A vetting by the Council, or others, also needs to be made to determine what the reasons for the change were and how the change would benefit Greenfield. It appears the ultimate decision would be made by the voters, not the Mayor and the Council. Therefore, this Committee would not make a recommendation at this time except to follow 43B.

- Section 7: Citizen Initiative Measures
  - A goal was for the language for this section to be simple and clear for the benefit of citizens and Councilors.
  - Suggestion was made to change the category of voters from “registered voters in the last biennial election” to just simply “of all registered voters”. Suggestion was made to raise the percentage of *registered voter signatures* needed for the submission of petitions. It was noted that suggestions received by the Committee had proposed 10% of registered voters. Discussion about having a low threshold or a high threshold of voters to initiate the petitions. The petitions were a check and balance for the voters who want to be sure that there was a way to challenge actions of public officials, so how and where to find the proper balance with a City Charter remains the question.
  - It was noted that the Citizens Initiative and the Citizens Referendum (7-8) were two separate types of petitions; one from the ground up (“initiative”) and one to protest a vote by a body (“referendum”).
  - It was suggested to add Appendices to both Sections to show a simpler and hopefully clearer step by step process of how to proceed under each Section, for citizens to better follow. Also a definitional sentence or paragraph at the beginning of each Section or in the definition section of the Charter.
- Section 8: Citizen Referendum Procedures
  - It was noted that when the proposed language was sent to the State Legislature they had omitted “of any measure” in the first sentence of subsection (a). This had been corrected.
  - A goal was for the language to be clear, and simply stated, but legally sufficient.
  - Some of the confusion in Section 7-8 was the fact that it cross referenced, instead of spelling out, parts of Section 7-7. Suggested to just spell out the cross references in Section 7-8 for ease of reading and clarity.
  - If the number of voters needed for the petition is increased, since it may be difficult to obtain so many signatures in the current time period of 10% of registered voters was the standard, then it was also suggested to extend the time in subsection (a) from thirty (30) days to forty five days (45).
  - How a special election would be addressed in reference to subsection (c) “If not placed before the voters at a regular biennial election, in order for the referendum to be binding upon the City, twenty-five percent (25%) of the registered voters of the City shall vote on the measure or issue placed before the City by citizens’ referendum procedure.”

Next meeting was scheduled for Monday, January 11, 2021, at 6:00 pm.

**ADJOURNMENT:** On a motion by Councilor Forgey, second by Councilor Gilmour, it was by roll call, 7 yes, 0 no,

**VOTED:** TO ADJOURN THE MEETING AT 8:05 P.M.